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ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 20 October 1995 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you in connection with the statement made by the Muslim delegate of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 October 1995 in the Third Committee during the consideration of the item entitled "Elimination of racism and racial discrimination" (see A/C.3/50/SR.6). The statement contains unsubstantiated allegations and presents a distorted picture of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the sake of truth, it is necessary to state the following.

The accusations that characterize the fratricidal civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a form of racism are absurd. Serbs and Muslims who have lived together for centuries in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a people of the same ethnic origin, whose sole difference is that they belong to different religions. Even the leader of the Bosnian Muslims, Alija Izetbegović, is of Serbian descent according to his own assertion. By invoking "racism" while referring to the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Muslim delegate is deliberately misusing the said term in order to cover up the true nature of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As is the case in all civil wars, horrible crimes and atrocities have been committed by all the parties to the conflict. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has always maintained that all those responsible for atrocities and breaches of humanitarian law in the ongoing civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Croatia or elsewhere, should be brought to justice. The Yugoslav committee for gathering data on crimes committed against humanity and international law has on numerous occasions forwarded information on the war crimes committed by Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example,

in the period from 1992 to 1994, the Serbs in the municipality of Goražde have been exposed to physical annihilation so that today out of 9,844 Serbs who according to 1991 census lived in Goražde only 100 remain.

The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia survived for decades as a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious State. If the Bosnian Muslims really wanted to live in a tolerant multi-ethnic State, there was no valid reason for them to leave the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, they chose to secede and create a Muslim-dominated State, which led to the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is therefore unwarranted to accuse the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the outbreak of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For its part, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has done its utmost to find a comprehensive peace solution to the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has accepted all five peace plans and played a decisive role in bringing to full success the latest agreements concerning basic constitutional principles reached in Geneva and New York.

Unlike in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where all major political parties are established along ethnic lines, the political process in Serbia is not predominantly characterized by the formation of national and religious parties. The name of the leading political party in Serbia is the Socialist Party of Serbia, which already in its title underlines that it is not a national party but a party of all the citizens of Serbia, irrespective of their national origin or religious affiliation.

From the statement of the Muslim delegate it is evident that what is really at stake is not to bring the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina to an end, but to vilify the Serbian people. Outrageous fabrications and distortions of the truth show only the resolve of the Muslims not to abandon militant stands and hostile propaganda, which certainly cannot help bring about the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 103.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
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